

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

it is evident that Catherine was as delighted and edified by him as he had been impressed by her. "God is calling you by holy and good inspirations," she wrote to Ippolito degli Ubaldini, a Florentine noble who sought her advice about entering religion, ^{cc} and He has prepared a holy and devout place for you, utterly cut off from the world, with a father, the Prior of Gorgona, who is veritably an angel, a mirror of virtue, with a good and holy family. Tell him your intention fully, and make a steady, firm, and true resolution. And if you decide to enter that holy and devout place (which will be the life of your soul), or whatever you determine, if you dispense your substance to the poor, give some of it to that place of Gorgona. For the convent needs to be put into shape, if it is to conform to the rule of the Carthusian order."¹ Two of the most beautiful of her spiritual letters are addressed to one of the monks of this convent, Francesco Tebaldi of Florence, who is apparently the same young man who had been so sorely tempted to take his own life. "We have all had a great desire to hear news of you," she says at the end of the first; "it seems to me that the demon has not slept, and is not sleeping with regard to you ; at which I am very glad, because I see that, by the goodness of God, the battle has not been to death, but to life. Thanks, thanks, to the sweet God eternal, who has given us so much grace ! Now you will begin to know that you are nothing, and to realize that your being, and all grace that is founded upon your being, comes from Him who is. To Him let all thanks and praise be rendered ; for it is His will that we give the flower to Him and that the fruit be our own." ²

A man of a more virile type than the gentle Prior of Gorgona, who is said to have first met Catherine at this time, and afterwards came under her influence, was the Florentine hermit of Vallombrosa, Don Giovanni dalle Celle, whose name runs through so much of the religious life of the Trecento. His spiritual

¹ Letter 130 (271). The convent of Gorgona was a Benedictine house that had recently been made over to the Carthusians, and would, therefore, need the building of separate cells for the monks.

² Letters 150 (62), 154 (63).